

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1035  
By Fowlkes

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the President, Publisher and staff of *The Pulaski Citizen* on the occasion of the newspaper's 150th anniversary.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the elected representatives of the State of Tennessee should honor those exemplary newspapers that serve their readers and respective communities with all the news that's fit to print; and

WHEREAS, *The Pulaski Citizen* is the longest-running newspaper in the history of Pulaski and Giles County, spanning 150 years from 1854 through 2004; its weekly visits into the homes of Giles Countians have brought national, state, and local news; and

WHEREAS, *The Pulaski Citizen* was especially crucial in the days before radio, television and the Internet as the only news media available to many people in Giles County; this excellent newspaper has served the business community equally as well by printing the advertisements that promote these businesses, thus contributing greatly to their success; and

WHEREAS, community improvement and growth has always been a primary function of *The Pulaski Citizen* under the leadership of the McCord, Romine, Smith, and Lake families; through the editorial urgings of *The Pulaski Citizen*, community life in Pulaski and Giles County has been greatly improved by such civic projects as a waterworks, a fire department, improved telephone service, new and better schools, an outstanding college, playgrounds for children, and hundreds of other benefits for the community; and

WHEREAS, one of downtown Pulaski's very oldest residents, *The Pulaski Citizen* is the oldest existing business firm in Pulaski; it has been in continuous publication since 1854, except during the War Between the States, when Pulaski was occupied by Union troops from the spring of 1862 until the end of the war and most, if not all, businesses were forced to close; publication resumed in January 1866 and has been continuous since that time; and

WHEREAS, *The Pulaski Citizen* was established in November 1854 by Abe Watkins and George E. Purvis and its first issue appeared on December 16, 1854; and

WHEREAS, in January 1856, Mr. Luther Wood McCord became joint owner with Mr. Watkins and in 1857 bought out Mr. Watkins' interest, becoming sole proprietor of *The Pulaski Citizen*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. McCord changed the name of the newspaper to *The Independent Citizen* and published the newspaper under that name until the 1862-1865 closure; when publication resumed in January 1866, the name was changed to *The Pulaski Citizen*, the name it has carried into the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, in January 1880, Luther McCord sold *The Pulaski Citizen* to his brother, Laps McCord, and his brother-in-law, John Bateman Smith; and

WHEREAS, on May 5, 1892, *The Citizen* was publicly offered for sale; in the August 18, 1892, issue, this notice appeared: "Having consummated a trade with Mr. Allen G. Hall, of Nashville, for *The Citizen*, beginning with the issue of August 25th, or at furthest of September 1st, will be under his management." This ended 38 years of *The Citizen* being in the hands of the McCord family; and

WHEREAS, the new proprietor, Allen Hall, soon secured the services of Mr. Frank R. Birdsall of Pulaski, a veteran newspaper man, to serve as Associate Editor and Business Manager; and

WHEREAS, some two years later, on April 5, 1894, Pulaski learned that W. B. Romine had bought *The Pulaski Citizen* in partnership with Frank Birdsall. Mr. Romine had married Elizabeth Wilkes, daughter of Judge and Mrs. John S. Wilkes of Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, within a few months, W. B. Romine bought out the interest of Mr. Birdsall and became the sole proprietor of *The Pulaski Citizen*; and

WHEREAS, William B. Romine served as Editor and Publisher of *The Pulaski Citizen* for the next 47 years, assisted by his wife, Elizabeth Wilkes Romine, who was highly involved in the social and civic life of Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, the Romines were especially interested in promoting improvements for Giles County and preserving the history of the county; they provided the publicity and assisted

the United Daughters of the Confederacy in raising funds for the erection of the Sam Davis statue on Pulaski's public square; and

WHEREAS, through their editorial urgings, Pulaski's and Giles County's way of life in the early 20th century was improved immensely by such modern innovations as electricity in homes, more awareness of proper sanitation, better streets, and better schools for the community's children; and

WHEREAS, in July 1941, J. Harwood Smith returned to Pulaski from Columbia, where he had been a Linotype operator with the *Maury Democrat* for 12 years, and purchased a half-interest in *The Pulaski Citizen* from W. B. Romine; a year later, in April, he bought the other half and became sole owner; and

WHEREAS, under Mr. Smith's leadership, the newspaper's circulation grew from 1,300 to 3,975 in 1968; issues grew in size from 4-8 page editions to 16-20 page editions; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith's weekly column, *Knockin' Around*, laid claim to readership in about 40 states, and if all the columns were laid end to end, he once boasted, they would stretch about eight miles in distance; and

WHEREAS, in September 1981, Mr. Smith succumbed to illness and his son-in-law, Charles R. Sheriff, managed the paper until and after Mr. Smith's death two years later on September 25, 1983; negotiations to sell the paper to Hershel Lake, owner of *The Giles Free Press*, began in early 1984, and on April 1 of that year, the newspaper was sold; and

WHEREAS, Hershel Lake and wife, Gerrie, had purchased *The Giles Free Press* in 1979 from George Martin, Dee Leo "Corky" Hoover and Alma Myers; after purchasing *The Pulaski Citizen* in 1984, the Lakes moved their family from Carthage to Pulaski; and

WHEREAS, these two excellent newspapers were then united by Mr. Lake, essentially making them a twice-weekly newspaper with different flags, as opposed to competing papers; Mr. Lake served as their publisher for the remainder of the 20th century; and

WHEREAS, during his exemplary reign as Publisher, Mr. Hershel Lake was extremely active in community development and chaired numerous fundraising activities, including raising \$600,000 for library expansion; and

WHEREAS, he served as President of Pulaski Main Street, Pulaski Rotary Club, Hillcrest Golf and Country Club, as a board member of the Giles County Economic Development Committee and as a Trustee of Martin Methodist College, which he currently serves as Vice Chairman; he was instrumental in starting the scholarship campaign at Martin, chairing the initial three campaigns; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Lake continues to be active in the Tennessee Press Association, serving as President (1987-88) and as President of the Tennessee Press Service from 1997 to the present; he is very pleased that his sons, Steve and David, are active in the family business and that they will continue to keep Giles Countians well informed; and

WHEREAS, on January 1, 2000, the first day of the new millennium, and after having coordinated a town celebration on Pulaski's square to commemorate that milestone, Steve Lake took over the duties of Publisher from his father, Hershel Lake, who has remained with the company as Owner and President; and

WHEREAS, for one hundred fifty years, *The Pulaski Citizen* has served the good people of Pulaski and Giles County as an informative, honest and culturally relevant source of local, national, and world news; and

WHEREAS, throughout its illustrious history that has spanned a turbulent and volatile era in American history, *The Pulaski Citizen* has served as a chronicle of many of the most magnificent triumphs and trials experienced by humankind; as such, its President, Publisher, and staff are to be commended for their exceptional commitment and dedication to promoting excellence in journalism; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and congratulate the President, Publisher, and staff of *The Pulaski Citizen* on the occasion of the newspaper's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, extending to them our best wishes for the continued publication of this fine newspaper for another one hundred fifty years.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.

